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Ethmia iranella Zerny, 1940 – a Spanish enigma (Lepidoptera, Ethmiidae)

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Abstract. Attention is called to the presence of *Ethmia iranella* in Spain and its occurrence in Italy is recorded for the first time.

Ethmia iranella was originally described as an Iranian subspecies of *E. bipunctella* (Fabricius, 1775); it was subsequently recognized as a valid species (Sattler 1967: 93) that is more widespread, although apparently local. In addition to its type locality (Iran) *E. iranella* is known from Turkmenistan, Transcaucasia, Syria, and Tutkey, as well as from several European countries (Greece, Romania, Hungary, France, Spain) (Sattler 1967: 93, Zagulajev 1981: 639, Neumann 2000: 69, Leraut 2011: 143). It is here also reported from the extreme south of Italy (Apulia, Lecce, Veglie, Torrelupomonaco, 7.vii.1961 (*Hartig*), and Taranto, Lido Silvana, 23.viii.1968 (*Hartig*)), the first record for Italy.

The presence of *Ethmia iranella* in Spain is verified by only three specimens (one male, two females), all collected by myself some 50 years ago.

One male from Valencia was collected on 10-11.vi.1960 at night around the lights of a kiosk at the campsite El Saler (39°20'50"N 0°18'57"W).

One female from Granada was collected on 28.v.1957 in the morning at rest on a tree trunk in an irrigated poplar grove opposite a now long defunct campsite on the outskirts of the town near the start of the road to the Veleta (Carretera de la Sierra).

One female (Sattler 1967: pl. 4, fig. 34) from the Puerto de la Mora (37°15'54"N 3°28'05"W), north-east of Granada, was attracted to the light of a *Petromax* paraffin lantern on 12.vii.1962 along a local track just off the Puerto.

Spain is one of Europe's lepidopterologically most visited and best collected countries and it still puzzles me that I should have collected those specimens myself on three different trips, in three widely separate localities – yet nobody else before or since should have found this species anywhere on the Iberian Peninsula. *E. iranella* is rather conspicuous but can be confused with *Ethmia bipunctella* (Fabricius, 1775). Indeed, I must confess that I did not recognize the true identity of those Spanish specimens until about 1963 when I commenced work on the Ethmiinae for the Microlepidoptera Palaearctica project. In fact, initially I took them for *E. bipunctella*, although I had

Figure 1. *Ethmia iranella* Zerny, ♂. Italy, Apulia, Lecce, Veglie, Torrelupomonaco, 7.vii.1961 (*Hartig*). NHMUK010862886. Top, dorsal view; bottom, ventral view. Red arrows mark black spot on vertex and ventral dark abdominal patches respectively. (Phot. David Lees).

noticed that superficially they appeared a little different from typical German *bipunctella*. The latter species is also present in Spain (I have examined specimens from the provinces of Catalonia, Segovia and Huelva) and is recorded from all provinces of Portugal (Corley 2015: 81).

I can only imagine that lepidopterists do not usually collect voucher specimens of such a well-known species as '*E. bipunctella*' and thus fail to notice *E. iranella*. Therefore any Iberian collection containing specimens of *E. bipunctella* should be thoroughly searched for possible overlooked *E. iranella*. The latter is easily distinguished externally from *bipunctella* in the black spot on the vertex (absent in *bipunctella*) and the large black dots on the abdominal sternites (uniformly orange in *bipunctella*). The black spots on the vertex and the black abdominal sternites are also shared by *E. treitschkeella* (Staudinger, 1879) and *E. mariannae* Karsholt & Kun, 2003, both closely related to *E. iranella*. The host-plants of all three species are still unknown but are likely to be Boraginaceae.

The Spanish specimens are kept in Zoologische Staatssammlung, Munich, Germany, the Italian specimens in Natural History Museum, London, UK; additional specimens from Italy are in coll. Hartig, Museo Regionale di Scienze Naturali, Torino, Italy.

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